

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
21 June 1966

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21 June 1966

HIGHLIGHTS

Saigon was reported quiet on 21 June with the government blockade still in evidence around the Buddhist Institute. Isolated minor cases of antigovernment dissidence have been reported in the northern provinces. In the air war over North Vietnam, two MIGs may have been downed in an engagement on 21 June.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Operation NATHAN HALE in Phu Yen Province again encountered heavy Communist opposition (Para. 1). US troops captured a Viet Cong hospital and 193 tons of rice 35 miles northwest of Saigon (Para. 2). Operation HAWTHORNE in Kontum Province ended yesterday with a total of 570 Viet Cong killed (Para. 3). An estimated 250 tons of cargo has been salvaged from the captured Communist trawler which was forced aground by US Coast Guard cutters yesterday (Para. 4). The Viet Cong have reportedly been using trucks and montagnard laborers to move supplies from Cambodia into Darlac and Pleiku provinces (Para. 5).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: The political situation remained quiet on 21 June as the government relaxed its curfew but continued its blockade of the Buddhist Institute in Saigon (Para. 1). Tri Quang reportedly now is in a private clinic in Saigon, where he was visited by several monks from the Institute (Para. 2). In a public letter to Tam Chau today, Premier Ky urged the Institute chairman to help clear away "misunderstandings" which have resulted in the antigovernment activities of some Buddhists (Para. 3). Central Vietnam is generally quiet, although traces of the antigovernment movement linger (Paras. 4-5). The South Vietnamese Government today approved Ceylon's request to send a two-man delegation to Vietnam to investigate conditions existing between the government and the Buddhists (Para. 6).

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III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
A clash between four DRV MIGs and three US F8E Crusader jet fighters on 21 June over North Vietnam resulted in the possible downing of two MIGs (Paras. 1-3).

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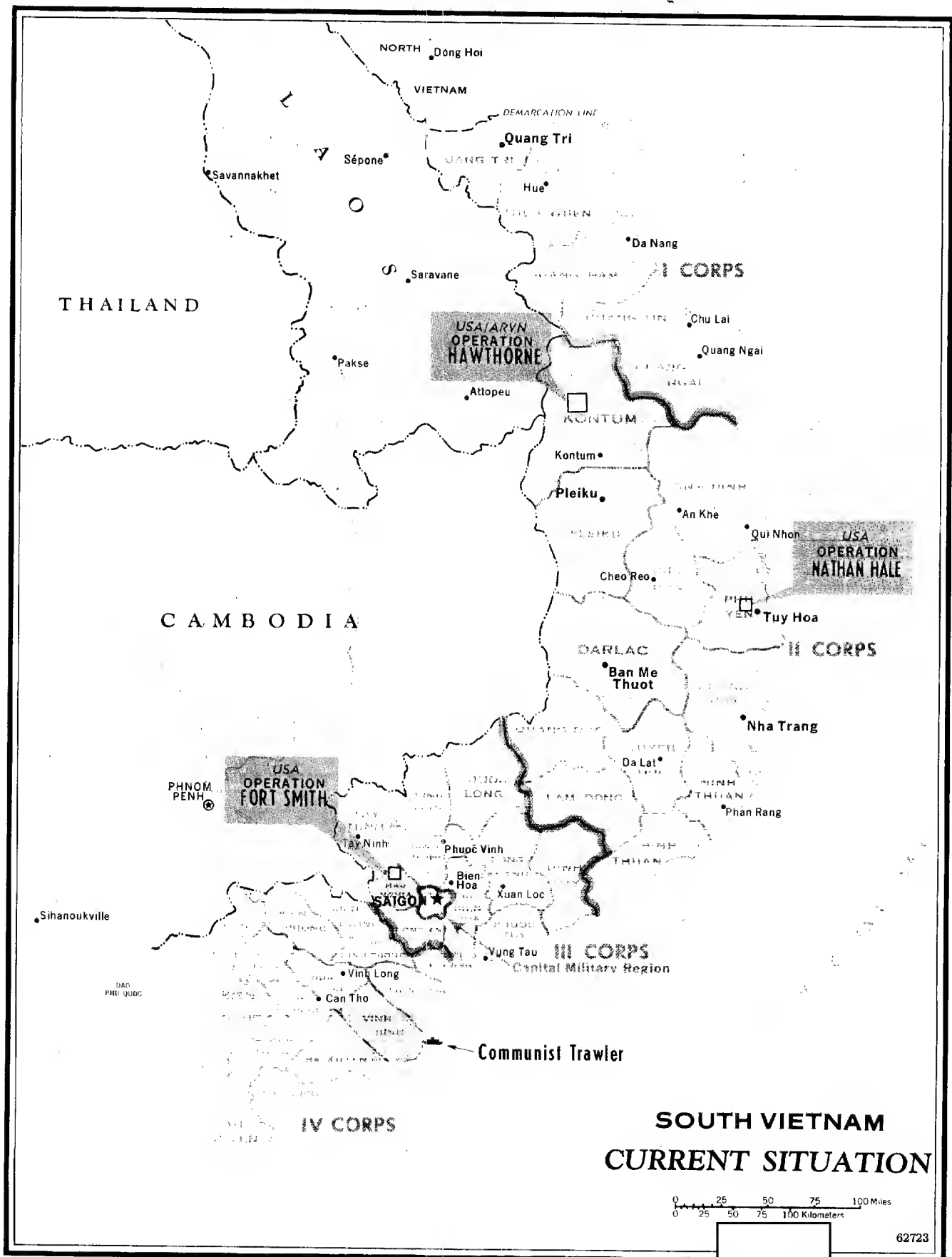
IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

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VI. Other Major Developments: Communists in Laos are using coolie labor to move supplies over bombed out portions of Route 914 (Para. 1).

21 June 1966

25X1



I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. US Army elements conducting search-and-destroy Operation NATHAN HALE northwest of the capital of Phu Yen Province have re-established contact with the enemy. This operation, which began on 19 June, made initial contact yesterday with a Communist force estimated to be between 400 and 600 men. During that engagement, 69 Viet Cong were reported killed; US casualties were 21 killed and 79 wounded. Heavy contact was reported again this morning (Vietnam time) with a Viet Cong force of unknown size.

2. According to a press report, elements of the US 1st Infantry Division attacked a Viet Cong base camp 35 miles northwest of Saigon in Hau Nghia Province. A complete Viet Cong hospital, equipped with an operating room and oxygen supplies, was found, and 193 tons of rice were seized. The American force, which suffered no casualties, killed three Viet Cong and captured two. This action may be a part of Operation FORT SMITH, a US search-and-destroy operation which began on 2 June in the area.

3. Operation HAWTHORNE, a combined US/South Vietnamese search-and-destroy ground sweep which began on 2 June in Kontum Province, ended yesterday. A total of 472 tactical air sorties were flown in support of the operation. Friendly casualties totaled 55 killed and 270 wounded. Communist losses were 570 killed, 22 captured, and 114 weapons seized.

Captured Communist Trawler

4. An estimated 250 tons of cargo has been salvaged from the 125-foot steel-hulled trawler which was forced aground by US Coast Guard cutters off the coast of Vinh Binh Province yesterday. The trawler, only partly damaged, has been refloated and may be towed to Saigon. US Navy ordnance and damage control personnel had boarded the ship and extinguished the flames. The following major items have been removed from the trawler: 30 82-mm. mortars, 500 Soviet 7.62-mm. assault rifles with bayonets, eight 75-mm. recoilless rifles, 50 to 100 40-mm.

21 June 1966

I-1

antitank grenade launchers, 12 12.7-mm. machine guns, 100 to 150 .32 caliber pistols, and an estimated 250,000 rounds of rifle ammunition.

Infiltration of Communist Supplies into Pleiku and Darlac Provinces

5. According to MACV, the Viet Cong used trucks during the first week of June to transport supplies from Cambodia into Darlac and Pleiku provinces. A battalion of armed montagnard laborers was also reportedly used for resupply in the Chu Pong Mountain and Ban Me Thuot areas. The montagnard battalion might be a transportation unit of the 630th North Vietnamese Army Division. Previous reporting has noted the use of montagnard laborers to transport supplies from Cambodia to the Pleiku and Darlac border area. The movement of supplies to this area tends to reinforce the possibility of a major buildup of a regimental level or higher troop supply base.

21 June 1966

I-2

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The political situation remained quiet on 21 June as the government relaxed its curfew but continued its blockade of the Buddhist Institute in Saigon. Buddhist claims that a cholera epidemic was imminent inside the Institute compound were apparently groundless. The diagnosis yesterday of a patient from the Institute reportedly showed no traces of the disease. Today, newsmen were told that two women in the compound had threatened to burn themselves to death but were advised against it by monks.

2. According to the press, Tri Quang was installed in a private clinic in Saigon by government police this evening (Saigon time), after having been transported from Hue earlier in the day. Newsmen were not allowed to see Tri Quang but reported that several monks from the Buddhist Institute did visit him.

3. Premier Ky today sent a letter to Buddhist Institute Chairman Tam Chau in which he again blamed antigovernment activities on the "misunderstandings" of some Buddhists. In particular, Ky emphasized that the government's move on Da Nang in mid-May was directed against disobedient civil servants and undisciplined military personnel and not against the Buddhists. Ky appealed to Tam Chau --who at least temporarily has lost control over the Institute--to explain this to "biased" Buddhists. Ky's letter was broadcast over Saigon radio this morning. Earlier, Tam Chau reportedly had appealed to Premier Ky to lift the blockade of the Institute and to release Buddhist monks now in government custody.

Traces of the Antigovernment Movement Linger in Central Vietnam

4. Although antigovernment activity in Saigon, Hue, and Da Nang has been almost entirely suppressed,

21 June 1966

II-1

sporadic hunger strikes, altar blockades, and demonstrations have been reported in various other cities in I and II Corps. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

Commercial activity in the northernmost provincial capital of Quang Tri is still reported below normal, although most of the civil servants formerly on strike there now are back at work. In Hue today, about 40 Buddhists, including monks and nuns, attempted to march through the city streets demanding that the government return Tri Quang. Police quickly broke up the demonstration and reportedly took the monks back to the pagodas in trucks. Yesterday, several Buddhist monks attempting to form a demonstration in Da Nang were arrested by government forces.

5. On the government side, measures in addition to those in Hue and Da Nang have been taken to remove dissident elements from central Vietnam. For example, some 23 antigovernment police officials have thus far been removed from the Nha Trang area to Saigon for transfer to "less sensitive" positions.

Ceylonese Fact-Finding Delegation to Visit South Vietnam

6. The South Vietnamese Government has approved Ceylon's request to send a fact-finding mission to investigate conditions existing between the government and the Buddhists in South Vietnam. The two-man mission plans to leave Ceylon tomorrow. One of the delegates, G. P. Malalasekera, is a rabid Buddhist leader who has gone on record with intemperate statements regarding US policy in Asia. [REDACTED]

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21 June 1966

II-2



III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. Four MIG-17 Frescoes--probably North Vietnamese--and three US F8E Crusaders clashed on the afternoon of 21 June (Vietnam time) approximately 55 nautical miles northwest of Hanoi. Initial pilot reports indicate that two MIG-17s may have been downed in the engagement. One F8E was apparently downed but it is not clear whether it was hit by ground fire or by cannon fire from one of the MIGs. When the MIGs attacked the US aircraft were providing cover for the pilot of a photoreconnaissance aircraft previously downed by ground fire.

2. The returning F8E pilots report having hit one MIG with a Sidewinder missile and a second with 20-mm. cannon fire. The first MIG was seen burning as it descended in a steep turn and is considered destroyed. The other MIG received hits in one wing and was observed streaming fuel as it left the area.

3. This is the first engagement with Communist fighters over North Vietnam since 12 June, when four F8E Crusaders clashed with four MIG-17 Frescoes in the same area northwest of Hanoi. On that occasion one MIG-17 was also shot down by a Sidewinder and a second was damaged with 20-mm. fire.

25X1

21 June 1966

III-1

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

21 June 1966

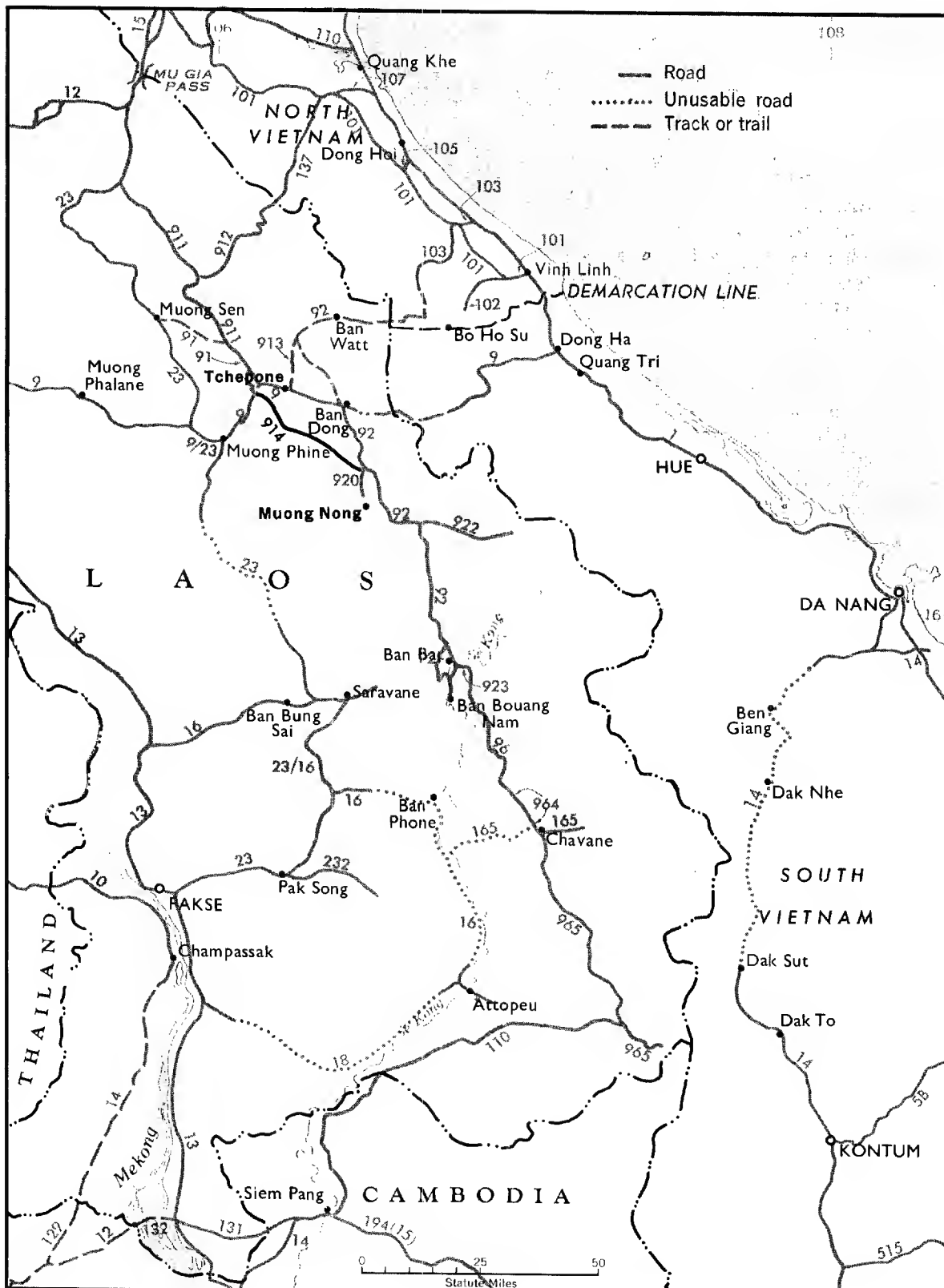
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SOUTHEASTERN LAOS



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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. Communists in Laos are currently using coolie labor to carry supplies around bombed out portions of Route 914 in the Laotian panhandle. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Communist forces on trails southeast of Tchepone transporting supplies to a point at which trucks could be loaded for the trip toward Muong Nong. A willingness to portage supplies around obstacles is another indication of the effort which is being made to keep material flowing south.

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21 June 1966

VI-1

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